



ELLA Research Agenda

2012-2016

The goal of the English Language Learners Research Alliance (ELLA) is to collaborate with states, districts, and schools on the use of data to identify and understand the diversity of their English Language Learner (ELL) population along a range of demographic factors, such as educational background, cultural and linguistic characteristics, socio-economic status, and special education designation and their equally diverse learning needs. The intent of the ELLA is to build capacity among its members, particularly at the district level, in the use of data specific to the education of ELLs in order to make informed decisions about the programs and services that would best meet the diverse learning needs of this heterogeneous population with respect to the double challenge they face of acquiring English as a second language and learning key subject matter content at the same time. It is clear that “one-size-fits-all” programming does not work. A more robust understanding of who their English language learners are and what differentiated learning needs they have will help inform the development of appropriate policies and practices that meet these needs.

In 2012, the ELL Core Planning Group (CPG) engaged in a research agenda setting workshop designed to craft a five-year program of work to achieve the goal described above. This program of work was intended to provide direction for current and future projects that would build a body of related research focusing on quality education for the diverse ELL populations in our region. Over the past two years, the research agenda has evolved to focus on two key topics:

- *Student Characteristics and Implications for the Design of Programs and Services:* States and districts have become increasingly aware of the heterogeneity of their ELL populations no matter how large or small those populations are. English language learners vary not only on the basis of demographic characteristics such as country of origin, language, and number of years in the US, but also on the basis of previous educational experience, literacy in their home language, and current level of English proficiency. All of these factors have implications for student placement, for the design of programs and services, and ultimately for student performance. CPG members have identified the following groups of ELLs as warranting further understanding and investigation of their learning needs: long-term ELLs (including US- and foreign-born ELLs); dually identified ELLs (i.e., ELLs with disabilities, and former limited English proficient students—FLEP, or students who have exited ELL programs/services). Understanding the relationship between student characteristics, the programs and services provided to them, and student performance outcomes has implications for policy issues such as the process for identification of disabilities among ELLs, reclassification of ELLs out of ELL status, and provision of ELL-focused professional development for all educators.
- *ELL-Related Professional Development for Educators:* CPG members observed that there are two major shifts occurring in the distribution of ELL populations: 1) ELLs are no longer clustered primarily in urban districts; suburban and rural districts are now facing the challenge of educating English language learners; and 2) more ELLs are now in general education classrooms—whether as a result of inclusion practices, English immersion policies and regulations, or exiting out of ESL programs. Given these two trends, the need for professional development on effective, tailored ELL instructional strategies and on culturally responsive classrooms for all educators, including administrators, has become critical. This need has become even more imperative with the implementation of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS).

TOPIC I: Characteristics of ELL students and implications for the design of programs and services

Subtopic	Questions	Project	Timing
Student Characteristics and Academic Outcomes	Who are our ELL students? What are their characteristics (e.g., home language, years of schooling)? What kinds of educational experiences have these students had? What supports did they receive? In what type(s) of programs did they participate? Was there consistency of implementation in the programs in which they participated?	Descriptive/Correlational study: Characteristics and Academic Outcomes of English Language Learners in a New England District Applied Research Methods Analyzing Nested Data Using Multilevel Modeling Bridge Event: Academic Trajectories of ELL and Former ELL Students: Implications for Policy and Practice Bridge Event: Multi-tiered Systems of Support: Developing a Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Model for English Learners	Publication expected Winter 2014 Publication expected Winter 2014 Bridge Event delivered October 2013 Bridge Event scheduled December 2013
	Which programs are most effective with which ELL students? What is the relationship between program characteristics/components and student outcomes? Does the relationship vary by student characteristics (e.g., by differences in home language, country of origin, years in US, years of schooling in home country)?	Descriptive/Correlational study: Characteristics and Academic Outcomes of English Language Learners in a New England District Applied Research Methods Analyzing Nested Data Using Multilevel Modeling	Publication expected Winter 2014 Publication expected Winter 2014
	What research already exists that identifies the essential components of specific ELL programs? Which program models have already been found to be effective and for which ELLs?	Webinar: English Language Learners and the Common Core State Standards	Bridge Event delivered December 2012

	<p>What are the predictors of successful exit from ELL status? Which programs are related to successful exit from ELL status? What is the relationship between ELL student characteristics and length of stay in ELL status? Do early exit students have different characteristics than later exit students?</p>	<p>Bridge Event: The Academic Trajectory of ELL and Former ELL Students: Implications for Policy and Practice</p> <p>Correlational and Impact Study: Predictors and Consequences of Reclassification in New York City</p>	<p>Bridge Event delivered October 2013</p> <p>Proposal to be submitted Winter 2014</p>
	<p>How successful are former limited English proficient (FLEP) students after exit? In particular, how successful are FLEP students who exit in the early grades?</p>	<p>Bridge Event: Academic Trajectories of ELL and Former ELL Students: Implications for Policy and Practice</p>	<p>Bridge Event delivered October 2013</p>
<p>Reliability and Validity of ELL-Related Data (including on student characteristics and program/service elements)</p>	<p>What data on student characteristics need to be gathered beyond basic demographic data that will provide a deeper and more robust understanding of the ELL population and its diverse learning needs? How can we develop consistency in the defining elements of programs and services so that valid comparisons can be made? What needs to be done in order to ensure that data is gathered in a reliable and valid manner?</p>	<p>Data Alignment Workshop</p>	<p>Year 3 2014</p>

TOPIC II: Professional development for educators & teacher characteristics

Subtopic	Questions	Project	Timing
<p>Educator Characteristics</p>	<p>What are the characteristics of principals, teachers, and other support personnel who work with ELLs? What kinds of certification do they have? What kind of preparation have they received (both pre-service and in-service)?</p>	<p>Technical Assistance: Data catalog of district data to explore the feasibility of a future study</p> <p>English Language Program Survey for Principals</p> <p>Tool Development: Profile of ELL Professional Development Offerings and Teacher Participation</p>	<p>Completed December 2012</p> <p>Survey expected to be approved for administration Winter 2014</p> <p>Summer/Fall 2014</p>

ELL-Focused Professional Development Offerings	What are the types and characteristics of professional development offerings (e.g., topics, format, and number of hours)? Who participates in what offerings?	<p>Tool Development: Profile of ELL Professional Development Offerings and Teacher Participation</p> <p>Descriptive Study: Profile of ELL Professional Development Offerings and Teacher Participation in a Northeast District</p>	<p>Summer/Fall 2014</p> <p>Possible study to be proposed in 2015</p>
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